

Satellite Dish guidelines

Although satellite dishes are not an original feature of buildings within Springfield's historic districts, the Springfield Historical Commission (SHC) does not want to unduly prevent homeowners from taking advantage of this technology. However, the SHC desires to see satellite dishes installed in a way that protects the historic character of the buildings involved to the greatest extent possible.

The SHC recognizes that there are technical limitations involved with siting satellite dishes, particularly that they must have an unobstructed view of certain horizons (often the southern). The SHC realizes that this may require an installation that is visible from a public way, however, there are usually many different possible locations to install a satellite dish, some more visible than others, and the inconvenience of the property owner or dish installer is not given as much weight as the appearance of the property to the public.

The SHC typically considers a satellite dish a "*Temporary structure subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the commission may reasonably specify.*"¹, and therefore encourages petitioners to request a Certificate of Non-applicability.

Duration of use and removal

Satellite dishes are permissible as long as they are in active use. All dishes no longer in use must be taken down. Permission for the satellite dish is granted to the property owner, and if a property is sold or otherwise changes hands, the dish must be taken down or the new applicant must submit a separate application. All cabling and wiring should be dressed in a neat and workmanlike manner.

Location

Non-visible installation

A non-visible installation involves a dish that is not visible at all from a public way. Lack of visibility of a proposed installation location is determined by the SHC or its staff, not by a property owner or contractor. Please note that on a corner lot, the rear of a building is often visible, so the rear does not automatically fall under non-applicability – visibility is the sole criterion for this category.

Minimally visible installation

If a dish cannot be installed in a way that is not visible from the public way, then a suitable location for the dish would be a location that is minimally visible to the public. Since the SHC puts the most emphasis on preserving the view of the front façade of the structure, no installations on the front façade are considered suitable.

¹ MGL 40C, Section 8, paragraph (1)

Every building is unique, so it is not possible to develop exact guidelines that cover every suitable placement. The following are examples of locations that could be considered (this list is not comprehensive, nor does this imply that these locations will be automatically accepted):

- The rear roof of a building so that it peers over the top of the roof to obtain the desired angle.
- The rear side of the top floor of the building.
- The side of a dormer so that the dormer blocks much of the public's visibility of the dish.
- Attached to a chimney so that the chimney blocks most of the public's visibility of the dish.
- An inconspicuous location on a garage or other secondary structure, preserving the look of the primary structure, provided that such an installation is less noticeable than alternative locations on the building.

Moderately visible installation

In the event that a minimally visible installation is impossible, the SHC will consider installation locations that have moderate visibility. The homeowner will first need to demonstrate that there is a particular condition affecting the building which precludes a minimally visible installation. Documentation for this could include reports from dish installers, site plans, or photographs.

The petitioner should strive to present a placement that, although moderately visible, is the least visible to the public. The SHC will then determine whether the proposed location of the dish can be approved without a significant detriment to the district.

Significantly visible installation

The SHC generally does not consider the hardship of not having a satellite dish to overcome significantly visible installations. The following are some examples of significantly visible installations that should be avoided:

- On a pole in the property between the foundation line and the public way.
- On a tree in the property between the foundation line and the public way.
- On the side of the first story of the building (unless the building only has one story).
- On the side of the front façade of the building.
- On a window sill.
- On the porch roof, porch railings, or the columns of porches.

Apartment blocks, both centrally owned and condominiums

Apartment blocks pose a special challenge due to their high visibility and unique placements. Since most apartment blocks have flat roofs that are not visible from the public way, rooftop installations should be the first option pursued. The SHC does not consider a lack of satellite service to overcome the detriment to the district of multiple satellite dishes sprouting out of the side of an apartment building.